

# MUUS NEWS

MATTATUCK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY • P.O. Box 876, Woodbury, CT 06798

♦ Meeting House - 122 S. Pomperaug Avenue, Woodbury, CT ♦ January 2010

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## *Illuminating Bleakness*

As I write this I am recalling the words to a hymn we sang together at our Holiday Vespers service. It speaks of the bleakness of winter, and seems suitable as I gaze out my office window at the snow covered pond and the winter silhouette of trees on the far shore. It is dusk. The sun has already set, and I am watching that gauzy time of day and night that is neither, and yet is quite beautiful. It is a scene that provides for just the right kind of solitude and reflection that the soul craves. I am thinking about how often our lives proceed regardless of the seasons. The same work schedule, the same duties. Very often it seems that our only acknowledgement of winter's arrival is that we scrape snow from our cars and put on extra clothing to stay warm. If you are inclined to stay indoors in the winter, the landscape outside my office may look bleak. Mostly colors in gray and brown tone, except for the barest hint of pink in the clouds at sunset.



*In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan.  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow.  
In the bleak mid-winter . . . in this world of pain,  
Where our hearts are open, love is born again. (SLT 241)*

*Words by John Andrew Storey*

I take comfort that this hymn names the changing of the season for us. That it admits for us that these winter days are days where our spirits may sink as, perhaps, we face for the first time that from which we have been running, in all our busyness. We are reminded that though we may struggle with complicated feelings that arise in winter, this is a special time, an incubating time. It is a time when the season calls us to put away our distractions and concentrate on the real work of living: that of facing up to the obstacles that hold us back from spiritual wholeness. In his book, "Beauty, The Invisible Embrace," John O'Donohue, says, "A time of bleakness can . . . be a time of pruning. Sometimes when our minds are dispersed and scattered, this pruning cuts away all the false branching where our passion and energy were leaking out. While it is painful to experience and endure this, a new focus and clarity emerge. The light that is hard won offers the greatest illumination. A gift wrestled from bleakness will often confer a sense of sureness and grounding of the self, a strengthening proportionate to the travail of its birth. The severity of Nothingness can lead to beauty . . . The ruthless winter clearance of spirit quietly leads to springtime of new possibility. Perhaps Nothingness is the secret source from which all beginning springs." (79) I wish you the fertile ground of Nothingness upon which to build the Ground of your whole being.

With love,

Rev. Jeanne Lloyd

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## Important Message from Rev. Lloyd

As follow up medical treatment to my accident at MUUS on 10/29, I will be undergoing surgery to repair a rotator cuff, on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Recovery will take approximately 5 weeks, to be followed by several months of physical therapy. During the initial 5 weeks of my recovery I am not permitted to drive to Woodbury (or anywhere else for that matter). The option of waiting to summer (as I asked hopefully of my orthopedic surgeon) was nixed.



You are a resilient congregation, able to handle dips and swells in rolling seas quite well. Nevertheless, I do not want the congregation to suffer by my absence. Thus, pastoral emergencies and communication needs remain high on my list of priorities for the congregation, while I am recovering. I will remain available by phone for individual calls and conference calls. I should be able to communicate by email during January & February, and will continue to assist with the newsletter and other church planning behind the scenes, as able. I am strongly vested in being at the Covenant Workshop on 1/23, and preaching the covenant sermon that follows on 1/24. However, it remains to be seen what I will be able to do, and Donna Pereira (Sunday Services Committee Chair) and I are making back-up plans for these dates, as well as other dates for which I was originally scheduled to preach. With any luck, I will return to MUUS on Thursdays on February 18<sup>th</sup>, and return to the pulpit on February 28<sup>th</sup>, or if recovery goes very well, Sunday, 2/7. I am hopeful that we will include in the 2/28 service a child dedication of one of our children who has not yet been dedicated by the congregation (parents please see "child dedication ad" elsewhere in this month's newsletter). If all goes well, the Adult Ed. Class on John O'Donohue's fascinating book "Beauty, The Invisible Embrace," will recommence on Thursday, 2/18, 7 pm, studying chapters 4 & 5. I will be sending out questions for these two chapters soon.

Email at [revlloyd@comcast.net](mailto:revlloyd@comcast.net), and notes/cards sent to 15 Pond Rd., Canton, CT 06019 are welcome.

Please know that I will be thinking of you all the time, and want to know how things are going, and what I can do to help behind the scenes.

With love,  
Jeanne

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## JOIN US AT THE CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT WORKSHOP

**Saturday, January 23, 2010, 1 - 5pm**



Question: What holds us together, if we have no common creed?

Answer: The way we agree to be with one another, as stated in a mutually crafted written congregational covenant.

Join your fellow MUUSers to achieve this major milestone toward growth and sustainability. On this day, The Rev. Marianne Power will lead us in a workshop whereby we name the highest ideals by which we wish to be with one another, in good times, and in bad. Having a congregational covenant, created and aspired to by a congregation, stands high on the list of best practices exhibited by healthy UU congregations. Such a covenant creates a culture of respect and civility that promotes this congregation as a safe place where members and visitors can grow in body and spirit. This process is an important cornerstone for all types of congregational growth. Its success is dependent on the attendance of MUUS members. Please come with your thinking caps on, ready to share your values and ideals of how we should be with one another.

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## SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD

Happy New Year!! I write tonight as your Board is busy compiling the results of our Cottage Meeting discussions. Thank you to all who participated! We have had some great input into the future of MUUS and look forward to sharing this with all of you. That said, we are planning a **Congregational Meeting for Sunday, January 31, 2010 at Noon**. Please put this date on your calendar as a "must attend event." The Board will be providing an overview of the **Cottage Meeting Results**. We would also like to present a **2010-11 Goal Budget** for review by the congregation. We believe it is important for the community to come together and agree upon what our financial goals for the coming year are so that as we enter the Annual Canvass we will be clear on our collective expectations.

As you will see in related articles, the Nominating Committee is proposing important **By-Law Language changes** that will enable them to do their work in a way that encourages and grows leaders in our midst. There is an important task and the Board is grateful to this committee for their embracing of concepts presented to them earlier this year. We also have an opportunity to take part in the **UUA Statement of Conscience** process and, ultimately, to send a delegate to General Assembly to represent our congregation. This will take some work on our part over the next few months, but I am excited that we can again be part of the democratic process we espouse.

All of these items require your vote! Please plan to attend and to offer your thoughts and concerns. **Be a part of the discussion that shapes the way forward for MUUS!** At a recent service we heard Jackie Shanti, District Trustee to the UUA Board, share about our fifth principle, "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large," as holy work. Meetings like this are our chance as a faith community to put into practice what we affirm and promote; to take part in the holy work of governing and guiding our way. I am confident that we are up to the task ahead of us and that we will continue to grow as the vibrant center of liberal religious tradition in Woodbury that is so needed in these times.

In faith,  
Tracy Johnson  
President

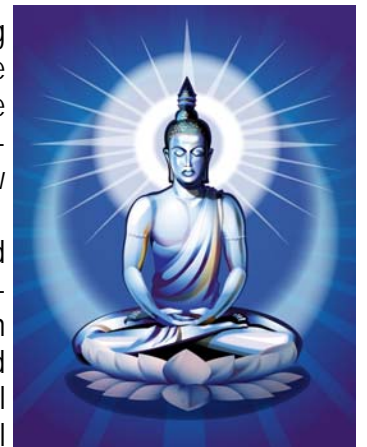
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## FRIENDS OF THE BUDDHA SGM

The Friends of the Buddha Small Group Ministry is transitioning from a reiterating short term group to an ongoing, stable group of friends investigating and applying the peaceful, enlightening ways of the Buddha's teaching. We have room for a few more members. Perhaps there are some of our fellow MUUS members that would like to commit to our group practice of Buddhism within a UU context with the beginning of a new year.

Our group has become increasingly intimate with a true sense of compassion and concern for one another. It truly is a small group *ministry* where there is love, trust, openness and honesty at the heart of our relationship. Our meetings are currently focused on the Eightfold Noble Path, the very core of the Buddha's teaching. We are studying and learning to practice skillful views and understanding, skillful intention and thinking, skillful speech, skillful actions, skillful livelihood, skillful effort, skillful mindfulness, and skillful concentration. Currently, our guide is a book written by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, a teacher in the Theravadin and Vipassana traditions of Buddhist practice.

Details on our practice can be found on the MUUS website. If you would like to seriously investigate and participate in the practice of UU Buddhism with us and you have the time and interest to make a serious ongoing commitment to our group, please contact John Cummings or Charlie Batchelder .



## IMPORTANT CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JANUARY 31, 2010

On the UUA website you can find descriptions about the importance of changing Nominating Committees into Nominating and Leadership Development Committees (ex. "Leadership Starts with Ownership" within Interconnections in [www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/)). Congregations are benefiting from having a more supportive and organized approach to leadership. Congregations are benefiting as more members assume leadership positions while gaining more confidence after some leadership training.

Consequently, at our upcoming congregational meeting, our Nominating Committee (Adele Taylor, chairperson; John Cummings, Barb Eler) is seeking approval for 2 major changes: a name change to Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC) and a by-law change to expand the committee from 4 to 6 members. The committee thinks that having 6 members is necessary to move forward with the increased work of leadership development.

In preparation for this transition, last Fall, Adele, John, and Barb interviewed Jo Anne Gillespie, (President, UUS:E, Manchester) about her congregation's successful transition from Nominating Committee into leadership development. Jo Anne said that most members welcomed extra support and guidance offered by this change, which began 4 years ago. She outlined several approaches that were useful to her congregation.

Our Nominating Committee adopted one approach by creating a Leadership Survey Questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire will reveal what leadership skills people would like to learn and what skills people would like to share. John Cummings distributed this questionnaire to a small sample of our congregational leaders last Fall. Results showed the generosity of our members, who wanted to share their expertise about leadership.

Now, the nominating committee will distribute this questionnaire at the upcoming congregational meeting. Everyone is urged to complete this brief survey at the meeting. Based on results, the committee will offer leadership training this Spring.



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### **Proposed by-law changes as the former Nominating Committee becomes the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC)**

Section 1.: The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC) shall consist of six members, three of which shall be elected at the Annual Meeting each year. Each member shall serve two years, with three members rotating off at the end of their term. (Members can be re-elected for a second two-year term.) The NLDC shall work with the Board of Trustees in keeping informed of the needs and long range plans of the society. In so doing, it will recommend or offer leadership skills development opportunities to those in leader positions or to the society at large, as appropriate.

Section 2.: no change

Section 3.: The NLDC shall nominate replacements for the NLDC and Endowment Committee as per specified terms. If an interim vacancy exists, the NLDC shall nominate a replacement to be voted upon by the Board of Trustees.

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## ADULT PROGRAMS

**SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES**~ There are a variety of long and short term groups currently active. If you have an interest in facilitating or participating, or if you have any questions at all, please contact any member of the SGM Steering Committee: Reverend Jeanne, John Cummings, Mary Lander, Diane Langlois, Marianne Ashby, and Mike Ingber

### CIRCLE OF GAIA~ January 20th at 7PM

The women's book group will be discussing The Help by Kathryn Stockett at Christine Edelson's. Contact Marilyn Martin for more information.

**MEN'S GROUP**~ Please call Dave Bolduc at 203/266-6490 for date and location.

### MUUS POETRY GROUP

Eighteen members and friends of MUUS have been meeting monthly to read and to enjoy poetry together. We meet in the meeting house at 2:30 PM on the last Thursday of the month. Contact Rudy Bremser or Mary Lohmann for info.

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## UUSC GUEST AT YOUR TABLE: FROM THE UUSC DECEMBER BULLETIN

Our annual Guest at Your Table collection for the work of the UUSC is underway and there is still time to participate while learning about the human rights struggles of those who benefit from our contributions.

UUSC partner Asia Pacific Research Network/People's Movement on Climate Change is currently in Copenhagen observing the negotiations underway there as an accredited NGO and organizing alternative forums and protests. Another partner, The Center for Human Rights and the Environment- Argentina is working in Copenhagen as the Climate Sustainability Platform, presenting proposals for next steps on climate change.

The UUSC is working with their partner Caritas Gulu to help the people of Uganda rebuild their lives after nineteen years of brutal war. Four areas decided upon through community dialogue include traditional cleansing ceremonies to lay to rest the people who were killed in the conflict, the rebuilding of homes, the need for oxen to plow overgrown fields, and work with MIT researchers to help people develop their own technologies in order to earn income. Such efforts give hope to a people scarred by years of war.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee works hard on both the national and international level to call attention to human rights issues and to bring an end to human rights violations worldwide. When we support their programs we do our part to promote justice, equity and compassion in our world. For more information on the work of the UUSC go to [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).




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## MUUS ANNUAL BOOK SALE



It's that time of year again when we collect our books for the book sale held this year on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Of course we'll need your help with the set up and break down so look for the sign up sheet after the holidays. Not only is this a good fundraiser for MUUS, but it is a way that we invite the larger community to visit our place of worship. Call Christine or the Ashbys for more information.

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## CHILD DEDICATION CEREMONY

MUUS Sunday Service on February 28, 2010 Have you noticed how much fun our children have with one another, and how much they are cared for by adult members? Weekend activities, bowling and baseball games with the Men's Group, mentoring, field trips, just hanging out together . . . all these are evidence of a community that cares about its children. If you are a member of MUUS, your child may be dedicated by this congregation as one of its own. A child dedication ceremony may seem reminiscent of baptism in other religions. It is that moment that parents, family members, and god-parents commit themselves to the life of the child. However, for Unitarian Universalists, it is so much more. It is that place where the congregation also commits itself to the health and well-being of the child and his or her parents. This is a special ritual, offered only 1-2 times each year. If you would like to celebrate the gracious gift that your child is to this world (on February 28th, 2010 during the regular MUUS Sunday Service) please contact Rev. Jeanne (revlloyd@comcast.net or 860-930-4101) by February 1st to begin planning for this ceremony. (Other dates may be available, if 2/28/10 is not convenient for your family.)

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## MUUS VISIONING WORKSHOP

### SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 2010

It's hard to know how to get where you want to go, if you don't know where you're going. Join other MUUSers as Martha & Andy Miser thoughtfully guide us to realize our shared vision and ministry for this wonderful congregation. What we learn this day will shape our lives for years to come. Please plan on attending. Your hopes and dreams for MUUS are needed. This day long workshop will be facilitated by Martha and Andy Miser, Unitarian Universalist Consultants. You can read about Martha at: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/aduroconsulting> and Andy at: [http://www.elysianenterprises.net/site/index.php?page=about\\_andrew\\_l\\_miser](http://www.elysianenterprises.net/site/index.php?page=about_andrew_l_miser) More details will follow as we get closer to the date

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## APPLYING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Making an informed choice is an integral part of the democratic process. As part of that process, our congregation has a chance to make its voice heard as the Unitarian Universalist Association proceeds to adopt a Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking. Our congregational vote will take place at a congregational meeting scheduled for January 31<sup>st</sup>, after the service.

To help make sure that each of our votes is an informed one, the Peacemaking Study Group is organizing a formal debate to take place on January 17<sup>th</sup> after the service. There will be two teams to debate the following resolution: "Be it resolved that the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society agrees that the Draft Statement of Conscience should be on the final agenda of the General Assembly 2010." As part of the debate there will be time for congregational questioning.

The draft statement can be found on our web site. It is a 5 page statement of conscience that has been in discussion for almost 4 years. A vote against the resolution is not so much a statement against Peacemaking but a sense that the wording is not sufficiently progressed for final vote at General Assembly.

A discussion about Peace is always relevant, but in light of President Obama's recent acceptance lecture of the Nobel Peace Prize and his arguments regarding a just war, the importance of a religious organization making a statement about Peace is very timely. Let's use this opportunity to explore what our faith tells us about Peace and what we want to share with our wider community. Contact Ed Edelson for more information.

**Make sure you take the time to read the statement, plan to attend the "great debate" on January 17<sup>th</sup> and be ready to vote on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Let us all practice our principles by applying the democratic process.**

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:30am - Informal RE 10:30am - Sunday	28 7pm - Drumming Circle	29	30	31 NEW YEARS EVE 2:30pm - Poetry Group @	1 NEW YEARS DAY	2
3 10:30am - Sunday	4	5	6 12pm - Men's Lunch @	7 7pm - Board of Trustees	8	9
10 10:30am - Sunday	11 7pm - Drumming Circle	12	13 7pm - SGM-Friends of 7pm - SGM-Walden @	14 8pm - Membership	15 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	16
17 10:30am - Sunday 11:30am - Peacemaking	18 MLK DAY	19	20 12pm - Men's Lunch @ 4:30pm - RE Committee 7:16pm - Circle of Gala @	21 7pm - Beauty, the	22	23 COVENANT MTG
24 10:30am - Sunday	25	26	27 7pm - SGM-Friends of	28 8pm - Sunday Service	29	30 8am - Men's Group
31 10:30am - Sunday 11:45am - Congregations	1 Complete Cong Surveys 7pm - Drumming Circle	2	3 12pm - Men's Lunch @	4 7pm - Board of Trustees	5	6

**This page was created for you to be able to tear off and post on your refrigerator!**

This calendar reflects the MUUS Master Schedule as of December 29th. Check the MUUS web site for updates.

## SUNDAY SERVICES 10:30 A.M.

**January 3rd** - "Imagine" - The things that we imagine can be a powerful force in making the world a better place. Join Mike Ingber and Christine Edelson in imagining 2010 and beyond.

**January 10th** - To be determined

**January 17th**— “Women’s Issues?” What is our responsibility as Unitarian Universalists who affirm and promote social justice and equity? Tracy Johnson will present a service with our monthly collection to support the work of the Susan B. Anthony Project in Torrington.

**January 24th**— “Our Promises to One Another” Join us as we reflect on the Covenant Workshop to be held at MUUS on 1/23/10. Rev. Jeanne will provide u with her thoughts on what difference it makes when we hold ourselves in relationship to one another by a mutually crafted covenant.

**January 31st**—“Perfection Not Required” To what degree do you aspire to excellence? To what degree do you achieve balance Rev. Jeanne will explore whether “perfect” is always “right” and how it just may be that Unitarian Universalism calls us both toward and away from being perfect.



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Time Sensitive

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

E-mail your submission by Midnight on the 15th of January to: [info@muusct.org](mailto:info@muusct.org)

Please abide by the following guidelines:

- DO NOT E-MAIL ATTACHMENTS ! If you compose in another program, copy and paste only the plain text into your e-mail program. (Copy & Paste functions are located in the programs' Edit menu)
- Send ONE news item per e-mail and label the subject with the TITLE & MONTH
- Use your spell check utility and proofread content BEFORE sending.
- Submit your item in finished form, including TITLE and AUTHOR/Committee AND a phone & email contact.
- When space is limited, first-time submissions will be given priority over repeat/similar submissions.
- MUUS reserves the right to edit submissions.



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Production by Donna Pereira  
Mailing by Terry Schroeder